



News Release

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Corps releases Record of Decision, new Missouri River Master Manual and final 2004 Annual Operating Plan

OMAHA – The Army Corps of Engineers released today its Record of Decision on the Final Environmental Impact Statement on the operation of the Missouri River dams and reservoirs, the new Master Water Control Manual, and the final 2004 Annual Operating Plan. The decision marks the fulfillment of 14 years of concentrated effort, study and debate on the long-term management of the Missouri River projects by the Corps and other federal agencies, states, tribes and river users.

“We believe the selected plan in the new manual is the best balance for serving the multiple purposes of the reservoir system as authorized by Congress, meets the Corps’ trust and treaty obligations to federally recognized tribes, and complies with the environmental laws, including the National Environmental Policy Act and Endangered Species Act,” said John Paul Woodley, Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works).

“This is one of the most difficult and complex issues facing the Corps of Engineers. It has been compounded by the current drought and the need to protect endangered species,” said Woodley. “I am truly proud of the dedication and sensitivity of the professionals in the Corps responsible for this achievement.”

In 2004, the Corps’ has committed an additional \$23 million to achieve its immediate goals. These goals listed below are reflected in the final 2004 annual operating plan:

- Construct an additional 1,200 acres of shallow-water habitat by July 1 for the endangered pallid sturgeon
- Implement the drought conservation measures
- Provide minimum navigation service without a split season and continue support to other authorized purposes
- Build sandbar habitat for the interior least terns and piping plovers
- Modernize and expand hatcheries for pallid sturgeon propagation
- Implement vigorous research, monitoring and evaluation of recovery efforts
- Establish the Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee (MRRIC)

“The Corps of Engineers is committed to improving the survival of the species, providing predictability to the people of the basin, and lessening the impact of severe drought by saving more water in the reservoirs,” said Brig. Gen. William Grisoli, Northwestern Division Engineer.

The Corps' retains its commitment to flood control and power generation. The dams protect 1.4 million acres of farmland and 40,000 residential and non-residential buildings along the river from Montana to the Mississippi River. This benefit averages more than \$410 million annually. They also provide average annual hydropower benefits in the range of \$670 million.

The new Master Manual complies with the Endangered Species Act. The Corps and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have been working together to address the immediate requirements of the pallid sturgeon, shaping a credible plan to develop 1,200 acres of shallow water habitat by July 1. Over the next two years, the Corps will engage the people of the basin through the MRRIC to shape the Amended 2003 Biological Opinion requirement for a "spring pulse" to meet the needs of the species and the people. The new research, monitoring and evaluation program will provide critical information to this review.

The new manual also incorporates an adaptive management strategy as part of a deliberate process to responsibly identify possible changes to water management. The Corps is committed to ensuring that the public is actively involved and well informed of potential changes in the regulation of the dams and reservoirs, and has the opportunity to comment on those proposed changes prior to implementation.

The long-term goal is to implement a comprehensive set of measures over 20-30 years to help recover the protected species and the ecosystem they depend on, said Grisoli. "I'm excited about the opportunities now available to the basin. The President's budget request for 2005 includes \$69 million for improvements along the entire Missouri River, which bodes very well for both the residents and listed species," he added.

"The people of the basin must work together as a team – federal, state, and local agencies as well as the diverse stakeholders – and remain committed to preserving the Missouri River as a national treasure," said Grisoli, "allowing everyone to enjoy its beauty and many resources."

All the Master Manual documents as well as the final 2004 Annual Operating Plan are available on the Northwestern Division website at: www.nwd.usace.army.mil.